

NCDOT Bicycle Policy

General

- Pursuant to the Bicycle and Bikeways Act of 1974, the Board of Transportation finds that bicycling is a bonafide highway purpose subject to the same rights and responsibilities and eligible for the same considerations as other highway purposes, as elaborated below.
- The Board of Transportation endorses the concept that bicycle transportation is an integral part of the comprehensive transportation system in North Carolina.
- The Board of Transportation endorses the concept of providing bicycle transportation facilities within the rights-of-way of highways deemed appropriated by the Board.
- The Board of Transportation will adopt Design Guidelines for Bicycle Facilities. These guidelines will include criteria for selecting cost-effective and safety-effective bicycle facility types and a procedure for prioritizing bicycle facility improvements.
- Bicycle compatibility shall be a goal for state highways, except on fully controlled access highways where bicycles are prohibited, in order to provide reasonably safe bicycle use.
- All bicycle transportation facilities approved by the Board of Transportation shall conform with the adopted "Design Guidelines for Bicycle Facilities" on state-funded projects, and also with guidelines published by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) on federal aid projects.

Planning and Design

- It is the policy of the Board of Transportation that bicycle facility planning be included in the state thoroughfare and project planning process.
- The intent to include planning for bicycle facilities within new highway construction and improvement projects is to be noted in the Transportation Improvement Program.
- During the thoroughfare planning process, bicycle usage shall be presumed to exist along certain corridors (e.g., between residential developments, schools, businesses and recreational areas). Within the project planning process, each project shall have a documented finding with regard to existing or future bicycling needs. In order to use available funds efficiently, each finding shall include measures of cost-effectiveness and safety-effectiveness of any proposed bicycle facility.
- If bicycle usage is shown likely to be significant, and it is not prohibited, and there are positive cost-effective and safety-effective findings; then, plans for and designs of highway construction projects along new corridors, and for improvement projects along existing highways, shall include provisions for bicycle facilities (e.g., bike routes, bike lanes, bike paths, paved shoulders, wide outside lanes, bike trails) and secondary bicycle facilities (traffic control, parking, information devices, etc.).
- Federally funded new bridges, grade separated interchanges, tunnels, and viaducts, and their improvements, shall be designed to provide safe access to bicycles, pursuant to the policies of the Federal Highway Administration.
- Barriers to existing bicycling shall be avoided in the planning and design of highway projects.
- Although separate bicycle facilities (e.g., bike paths, bike trails) are useful under some conditions and can have great value for exclusively recreational purposes, incorporation of on road bicycle facilities (e.g., bicycle lanes, paved shoulders) in highway projects are preferred for safety reasons over separate bicycle facilities parallel to major roadways. Secondary complementary bicycle facilities (e.g., traffic control, parking, information devices, etc.) should be designed to be within highway rights-of-way.
- Technical assistance shall be provided in the planning and design of alternative transportation uses, including bicycling, for abandoned railroad rights-of way. This assistance would be pursuant to the National Trails act Amendment of 1983, and the resultant national Rails to Trails program, as will the Railway Revitalization Act of 1975.
- Wherever appropriate, bicycle facilities shall be integrated into the study, planning, design, and implementation of state funded transportation projects involving air, rail, and marine transportation, and public parking facilities.
- The development of new and improved bicycle control and information signs is encouraged for the increased safety of all highway users.
- The development of bicycle demonstration projects which foster innovations in planning, design, construction, and maintenance is encouraged.
- Paved shoulders shall be encouraged as appropriate along highways for the safety of all highway users, and should be designed to accommodate bicycle traffic.
- Environmental Documents/Planning Studies for transportation projects shall evaluate the potential use of the facility by bicyclists and determine whether special bicycle facility design is appropriate.
- Local input and advice shall be sought, to the degree practicable, during the planning stage and in advance of the final design of roadway improvements to ensure appropriate consideration of bicycling needs, if significant.
- On highways where bicycle facilities exist, (bike paths, bike lanes, bike routes, paved shoulders, wide curb lanes, etc.), new highway improvements shall be planned and implemented to maintain the level of existing safety for bicyclists.

- Any new or improved highway project designed and constructed within a public-use transportation corridor with private funding shall include the same bicycle facility considerations as if the project had been funded with public funds. In private transportation projects (including parking facilities), where state funding or Department approval is not involved, the same guidelines and standards for providing bicycle facilities should be encouraged.

Construction

- It is the policy of the Board of Transportation that all state and federally funded highway projects incorporating bicycle facility improvements shall be constructed in accordance with approved state and federal guidelines and standards.
- Bicycle facilities shall be constructed, and bicycle compatibility shall be provided for, in accordance with adopted Design Guidelines for Bicycle Facilities and with guidelines of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.
- Rumble strips (raised traffic bars), asphalt concrete dikes, reflectors, and other such surface alterations, where installed, shall be placed in a manner as not to present hazards to bicyclists where bicycle use exists or is likely to exist. Rumble strips shall not be extended across shoulder or other areas intended for bicycle travel.
- During restriping operations, motor vehicle traffic lanes may be narrowed to allow for wider curb lanes.

Maintenance

- It is the policy of the Board of Transportation that the state highway system, including state-funded bicycle facilities, shall be maintained in a manner conducive to bicycle safety.
- State and federally funded and built bicycle facilities within the state right-of-way are to be maintained to the same degree as the state highway system.
- In the maintenance, repair, and resurfacing of highways, bridges, and other transportation facilities, and in the installation of utilities or other structures, nothing shall be done to diminish existing bicycle compatibility.
- Rough road surfaces which are acceptable to motor vehicle traffic may be unsuitable for bicycle traffic, and special consideration may be necessary for highways with significant bicycle usage.
- For any state-funded bicycle project not constructed on state right-of-way, a maintenance agreement stating that maintenance shall be the total responsibility of the local government sponsor shall be negotiated between the Department and the local government sponsor.
- Pot-holes, edge erosion, debris, etc., are special problems for bicyclists, and their elimination should be a part of each Division's maintenance program. On identified bicycle facilities, the bike lanes and paths should be routinely swept and cleared of grass intrusion, undertaken within the discretion and capabilities of Division forces.

Operations

- It is the policy of the Board of Transportation that operations and activities on the state highway system and bicycle facilities shall be conducted in a manner conducive to bicycle safety.
- A bicyclist has the right to travel at a speed less than that of the normal motor vehicle traffic. In exercising this right, the bicyclist shall also be responsible to drive his/her vehicle safely, with due consideration to the rights of the other motor vehicle operators and bicyclists and in compliance with the motor vehicle laws of North Carolina.
- On a case by case basis, the paved shoulders of those portions of the state's fully controlled access highways may be studied and considered as an exception for usage by bicyclists where adjacent highways do not exist or are more dangerous for bicycling. Pursuant to federal highway policy, usage by bicyclists must receive prior approval by the Board of Transportation for each specific segment for which such usage is deemed appropriate, and those segments shall be appropriately signed for that usage.
- State, county, and local law enforcement agencies are encouraged to provide specific training for law enforcement personnel with regard to bicycling.
- The use of approved safety helmets by all bicyclists is encouraged.

Education

- It is the policy of the Board of Transportation that education of both motorists and bicyclists, regarding the rights and responsibilities of bicycle riders, shall be an integral part of the Department's Bicycle Program.
- School systems are encouraged to conduct bicycle safety education programs as a part of and in addition to the driver's education program, to the maximum extent practicable, and in conjunction with safety efforts through the Governor's Highway Safety Program. The Division of Motor Vehicles is also urged to include bicycle safety and user information in its motor vehicle safety publications.

Parking

- It is the policy of the Board of Transportation that secure and adequate bicycle parking facilities shall be provided wherever practicable and warranted in the design and construction of all state-funded buildings, parks, and recreational facilities.